

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-20 IGA-02 MC-02 ACDA-19 OMB-01 EB-11

EUR-25 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0292

INFO USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 8861

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, ET, US

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH GENERAL AMAN RE MILITARY ASSISTANCE

1. SUMMARY. ON JULY 26 I HAD 45 MINUTE DISCUSSION WITH ACTING DEFENSE MINISTER GENERAL AMAN WHICH WAS DEVOTED ALMOST ENTIRELY TO HIS UNHAPPINESS REGARDING PRESENTLY ENVISAGED LEVEL OF US MILITARY ASSISTANCE. OUTCOME OF MEETING WAS BEST EXPRESSED IN HIS PARTING WORDS: "I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND."

2. INASMUCH AS GENERAL AMAN IS NOT ONLY ACTING MINDEF AND IEMF CHIEF OF STAFF, BUT IS ALSO HELD IN HIGH REGARD BY MILITARY REFORMISTS, I THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT TO CALL ON HIM. IN OPENING REMARKS I INFORMED HIM THAT USG HAD JUST SENT FAVORABLE RESPONSE TO IRANIAN GOVERNMENT IN REPLY TO ITS REQUEST FOR US VIEWS ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA. I THEN SPOKE OF SIMILARITY OF INTERESTS OF OUR TWO COUNTRIES IN EAST AFRICA AND EMPHASIZED DESIRE OF USG AND THIS EMBASSY TO COOPERATE FULLY WITH IEMF TO THE EXTENT OF RESOURCE AVAILABILITY.

3. NOT TO MY SURPRISE, GENERAL AMAN RESPONDED WITH THESIS THAT HE WAS UNABLE EXPLAIN TO ETHIOPIAN SOLDIERS WHY THEIR GREAT FRIEND THE USG, ON WHOM THEY WERE COMPLETELY DEPENDENT FOR DEFENSE, CONFIDENTIAL

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WAS NOT PROVIDING THEM WITH ESSENTIAL DEFENSE NEEDS IN TERMS OF

EQUIPMENT. AT SOME LENGTH I WENT OVER FAMILIAR GROUND REGARDING ATTITUDE OF PUBLIC AND CONGRESS TOWARDS MILITARY ASSISTANCE, GEAT EFFORTS WHICH HAD BEEN MADE TO OBTAIN SOME INCREASES FOR ETHIOPIA, CEILING ON ARMS AID TO AFRICA, ETC. I ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT THERE ARE OTHER WAYS IN WHICH US COULD HELP STRENGTHEN ETHIOPIAN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT, MENTIONING IN THIS CONTEXT THAT NUMEROUS MAAG RECOMMENDATIONS HAD NOT YET BEEN ADOPTED BY IEMF.

4. GENERAL AMAN THEN TOOK LINE THAT ETHIOPIAN YOUNG MEN HAD BLED AND DIED FOR US IN KOREA BUT THAT USG APPARENTLY HAS NO INTENTION OF REPAYING THIS DEBT. HE ALSO ARGUED THAT NORTH KOREAN AND SOVIET AID TO SOMALIA IS LARGELY MOTIVATED BY DESIRE TO REVENGE ETHIOPIA'S ACTION IN KOREA. IN RESPONSE I MAINTAINED THAT BOTH US AND ETHIOPIA HAD FOUGHT IN KOREA FOR GREATER SECURITY AGAINST AGGRESSION FOR ALL PEACE-LOVING NATIONS.

5. WHEN GENERAL AMAN TOOK LINE THAT IF USG CANNOT MEET IEG'S DEFENSE NEEDS THEN "WE WILL HAVE TO CONSIDER WHAT ELSE WE CAN DO", I SAID I HAD BEEN PLEASED TO SEE EFFORTS WHICH IEG WAS CURRENTLY MAKING TO OBTAIN MILITARY ASSISTANCE FROM IRAN. I INDICATED THAT THIS MIGHT NOT BE ONLY CASE IN WHICH USG COULD ENDEAVOR ASSIST IEG TO OBTAIN MILITARY EQUIPMENT.

6. TOWARD CONCLUSION GENERAL AMAN ARGUED THAT HE FELT USG-IEG RELATIONSHIP HAD DETERIORATED, SINCE IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS BEFORE HE BECAME SENATOR USG WAS ALWAYS PREPARED PROVIDE IEG WHATEVER IT NEEDED. I REPLIED WITH THESIS THAT VIETNAM WAR HAD HAD TREMENDOUS EFFECT ON US MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM THROUGHOUT WORLD.

7. GENERAL AMAN'S CONCLUDING WORDS, UTTERED WITH A SMILE BUT A SHAKE OF THE HEAD WERE: "I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND."

8. COMMENT. IT IS APPARENT FROM THIS CONVERSATION THAT GENERAL AMAN IS AT LEAST AS DISSATISFIED WITH PRESENTLY ENVISAGED LEVEL OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE AS OTHER ETHIOPIAN MILITARY LEADERS HAVE PROVEN TO BE IN LAST YEAR AND A HALF. WE BELIEVE HE IS ACCURATELY REFLECTING VIEWS OF MILITARY REFORMISTS AND SPECIFICALLY OF ARMED FORCES COORDINATING COMMITTEE IN THIS RESPECT. THE FULL MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WHICH WAS PREPARED REGARDING CHMAAG'S CONVERSATION OF JULY 16 WITH GENERAL AMAN (ADDIS 8409) SAID ON CONFIDENTIAL

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THIS POINT: "HE WAS CHARGED BY THE TROOPS AND THE AFCC TO BRING THIS SITUATION TO THE ATTENTION OF CHMAAG SO THAT CHMAAG COULD NOTIFY THE USG OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION AND REQUEST MORE ASSISTANCE FOR ETHIOPIA. HE HAD TO INFORM THE AFCC OF CHMAAG'S REPLY TO THIS APPEAL."

9. OUR CONVERSATION WAS COURTEOUS THROUGHOUT, WITH GENERAL AMAN SPEAKING WITH BLUNTNESS FOR WHICH HE IS WELL KNOWN. BOTH THE

BIOGRAPHIC RECORD AND THIS CONVERSATION SUGGEST THAT HE IS A
HIGHLY INTELLIGENT AND FORCEFUL INDIVIDUAL BUT ONE WHO CAN BE
RATHERFANATICAL ON SOME SUBJECTS.

10. AT SEVERAL POINTS IN CONVERSATION I EMPHASIZED TO GENERAL
AMAN THAT I WAS SPEAKING ONLY IN GENERAL TERMS ABOUT CONSTRAINTS
ON US MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND THAT A SPECIFIC RESPONSE REGARDING
IEG'S DESIRE FOR AN INCREASE IN THE CASH PURCHASE LIMIT SHOULD
SOON BE FORTHCOMING FROM WASHINGTON.
WYMAN

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